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# An Italian School of Veterinary Medicine

*Gianpaolo Maestrone, D.V.M.*

THE SCHOOL OF VETERINARY MEDICINE of the University of Milan is one of the oldest in Italy. In 1789 the Austrian Government, which dominated the northern part of Italy at that time, started this school for the training of blacksmiths under teachers who had received their degree in Lyon and Alford, France. The official paper containing this order is still displayed in a frame in the library of the veterinary school. A few years later, under Napoleon, the activity of a true School of Veterinary Medicine with a three-year curriculum was begun.

A student was required to have obtained a certain degree of education to be admitted. The school remained in the same place until 28 years ago, when it was transferred to the new buildings. From 1834 until 1860, the date of the proclamation of the Italian Kingdom, the name was The Imperial Royal Veterinary Institute. Since 1860 the name has been The Royal Superior School of Veterinary Medicine, and is considered a university.

Prior to 1908 admission was by examination, and at the end of a four-year course the student received the D. V. M. degree. From 1908 an examination has

not been required for admission to this school, but it is necessary to have graduated from a junior college (liceo) or a technical institute. Since 1927 only those graduating from liceo may be admitted to The Royal Superior School of Veterinary Medicine.

Even though the number of subjects taught has increased since that time, it is still a four-year course.

Before telling you about the university I will give you something of the background that the students must have before being admitted to the Veterinary School.

In Italy, after a two-year kindergarten, which is not compulsory, the child begins grade school at six years of age. Grade school is five years long after which, by passing a week long examination, the boy is admitted to the high school (ginnasio), also five years long. Here he must pass two difficult examinations, one in the third year and one in the fifth year, before he starts the junior college (liceo). This school is three years long. For the classic liceo the most important courses are classic subjects while those for the scientific liceo are more exacting sciences. To graduate from liceo the student must pass an examination on the different subjects taught in the last three years. The examining board is made up of professors from various schools outside the province in which the liceo is situated. The president of this board is a university professor. If

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Dr. Maestrone graduated from the School of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Milan, Italy, in 1951. He joined the staff at the university in January 1952. He is an instructor (Assistente Ordinario) in the Dept. of Veterinary Hygiene. Dr. Maestrone plans to return to Milan in June 1954.

the student is not successful in this examination he must repeat the last year of school and attempt another examination.

The Veterinary School of the University of Milan is located in an area called Studies City which is similar to a college campus, and is about 20 minutes by street car from the center of Milan. In addition to the veterinary school, other scientific sections located in Studies City are: engineering, chemistry, physics, agronomy and some departments of the medical school. In contrast to most American universities, most of the students at the University of Milan commute and therefore there are no women's dormitories, fraternities or sororities. Some of the men students live in the "House of the Student" which is a combined dormitory and student union. The veterinary school buildings, some of which were damaged during air raids in the last war, are two stories high, dark

liceo is necessary for admission and no examination is required. The average number of freshmen is 50-60 and this dwindles to 20-30 graduating seniors. In Italy all of the universities are regulated by the central Department of Education in Rome; the methods of teaching and examining are about the same the country over. The University of Milan is considered one of the most strict and one of the best in Italy. For this reason many veterinary students transfer to another department or school or drop their studies before their completion.

The four-year course is divided into two biennial periods. If the student does not finish the examinations of the first biennial period he can not be admitted to the second one, although it is possible to be admitted to the second year before having finished the first year's examinations and to the fourth before having finished



**The Main Entrance.** This building formerly housed the administration offices. At present the library and department of Zoology are located here. Note the beautiful landscaping.

red in color and are situated among small gardens and trees, differing from the other university buildings in this respect.

As I have mentioned, graduation from

those in the third year. The examinations are taken orally before a commission formed by three examiners, two being full professors.

As a general rule each subject is taught in a minimum of three hours of class and one or two hours of laboratory per week, but after his classes and laboratories the student may spend as much time as he likes in the different departments. That is usually done by the juniors and seniors to prepare their thesis which is required for graduation. The subjects studied are as follows: anatomy, botany, chemistry, physics, physiology and general zoology in the first year; anatomy, physiology, general pathology, pathological anatomy and zoognostic (animal husbandry) in the second year; pathological anatomy, surgical clinic, medical clinic, pharmacology, general pathology, special surgical pathology, special medical pathology, infectious diseases, food production and marketing and general zootechnic (genetics) in the third year; surgical clinic, medical clinic, food inspection, infectious diseases, special surgical pathology, special medical pathology, obstetrics, and special zootechnic in the fourth year. Besides these fundamental courses there are other so-called complementary subjects of which at least six must be studied by the student. These include: parasitology in the first year; podology (foot) topographical anatomy, zootechnic hygiene, veterinary marketing laws and microbiology in the second year; radiology (six months course), silk worm and bee science (six months course) and post mortem technique in the third year; tropical veterinary pathology, and fish life and inspection in the fourth year. Even though only six of these subjects are compulsory, the student must study nearly all of them because they are required before being allowed to take some of the fundamental examinations. During the third and fourth years the student must prepare a thesis on some veterinary subject.

The classes are generally held in the buildings of the school, but in the first 2 years many classes are held elsewhere. Obstetrics recitations use the stockyard barns as well as the university barns. Material for meat inspection and post mortem examination is supplied in large amount from the stockyards. Since the war the supply of clinical material is not

as large as before. Because our agriculture has been mechanized there are only a few horses brought to the clinic. These are mostly race and Army horses.

At the end of this four-year course, having finished all the examinations, the student must formally discuss his thesis before the faculty in order to obtain the degree in Veterinary Medicine. Before being admitted to the state examination, which is necessary for the right to practice, he must have six months of practical experience. The practical training is divided into four 45-day periods. One period each is spent in obstetrics, meat inspection, infectious diseases and animal husbandry. This way the student has to spend more than four years, generally five, in the university or in departments connected with the university. Because of this situation a bill has been proposed to increase the course in veterinary medicine from four to five years, but as yet nothing has been done.

The students with a very good scholastic average are dismissed from paying fees, and those with a good average are dismissed from half of them. Also some grants are made to students. Foreign students pay only half of the regular fees.

The teaching staff is composed of full professors of the Veterinary Medicine School for strictly veterinary subjects. Professors of the Department of Science teach chemistry, physics and zoology; of Agriculture, general and special zootechnics and botany; of Human Medicine, oncology and radiology. Directors of food markets teach food production and marketing and fish inspection. Directors of drug factories and bacteriological laboratories instruct pharmacology and bacteriology. Infectious diseases is taught by directors of biological factories. The state veterinarians teach veterinary police laws. The integration of the regular veterinary teaching staff with veterinarians and specialists in related fields is possible in Milan only because of the activity and the presence of large markets, drug and biological factories which allows the students to have a broader and more up-to-date view of their profession.